

Franchising USA

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REBRANDING YOUR FRANCHISE FOR HYPER-GROWTH



things up in order to attract high caliber franchisees and ultimately take CCI to the next level.

Before the rebranding process began we were well established and producing a profit, but when the economy began to suffer we took a good hard look at our internal organization and realized we'd need to make serious changes to reach long-term growth. Over the next two years, between 2011 and 2013, we outlined where these adjustments needed to be made, starting with expanding our expertise by welcoming outside advisement.

"We're always looking for ways to help our franchisees continue to evolve and become increasingly marketable to all of the diverse industries we serve."

There comes a time for every business when a change – or possibly several changes – is needed in order to avoid stagnancy and push for growth. This becomes even more pertinent for family owned businesses facing ownership transitions between generations.

For Creative Colors International (CCI), the ultimate in on-site repair, restoration, cleaning, protection, and dyeing of leather, vinyl, plastic and fabric, the changes started emerging in 2011 when the second generation had settled in as the new owners. Founded in 1991 as the franchise affiliate to J&J's Creative Colors, the original industry leader in refurbishment techniques and systems, CCI was passed down from Jim and JoAnn Foster to their three children. Throughout the 30 plus years since J&J's launched in 1980, CCI followed the same business model using the same branding and the same processes. Upon the second generation Fosters' leadership, we knew it was time to step

Outsource When Necessary

Our first step in the revamping process was hiring a franchise sales group. This group was dedicated to assisting with our franchise development strategies as means to attract a high quality pool of prospects. Beginning in the summer of 2011, we started a year-long process of narrowing down sales group options to find the right fit for us – one that upholds the same values and vision for our diverse concept and brand. Some of the main attractive traits of the group we hired are its strong reputation among fellow franchise systems, and that it only takes on a handful of clients at a time to ensure ample time and energy is allotted to each business.

We knew we didn't have the manpower to internally push for franchise development as much as we wanted, so finding the right sales group was the smartest first step we could have taken to get the ball rolling.

Modernize Marketing Materials

Now that we had our franchise development plans in order, it was important to start applying the rebranding to the logos, vans and marketing collateral. The imaging hadn't been updated since 2000, so in order to attract the quality prospects drawn in by the sales group, the branding needed to be modernized and made sleeker. Working off the old logo's fonts from the 1980's and dull coloring, we renewed the CCI logo with brighter colors and newer fonts, plus conducted a website rework in early 2012. The entire process was very lengthy, working with multiple companies for nearly three months to finalize the perfect logo to match CCI's vision. The tricky part was refining the logo without pulling away too much from the original branding. At that point, we'd spent 30 years building the brand so we didn't want to completely start from scratch or muddy the waters for our current customers.

Take A Blended Conversion Approach With Franchisees

Once we agreed on a logo, it was time to revamp the vans – our number one form of advertising in the franchise network. We wanted to come up with a half wrap and full wrap option for our franchisees to choose from; something colorful, bright and eye-catching that would be consistent and cohesive with our new logo and marketing materials. In April 2013, the van images were finalized and the conversion

process began. We decided that any new van sold would have graphics with the new design, and for franchisees who had purchased vans prior to the switch, we implemented an incentive of co-op dollars where 50 percent of costs and installation are covered with the update. For those who have several vans, we understand it's more costly to modernize the graphics and have taken a blended approach to the phase over.

Stretch Franchise Opportunities For Growth

At this point in the rebranding process the franchise sales group was able to leverage our new logos to help CCI launch new franchise model offerings to prospective franchisees. CCI had always offered a multi-unit model for single owner operators who were looking to expand but hadn't considered offering the multi-unit model to prospects from day one. Through restructuring the franchise models, we began offering three different models to the public: the owner operator model (single unit), the multi-unit model, and the regional development (RD) model. With the sales groups' pool of applicants having a larger amount of capital, we've found that offering the multi-unit and RD models as choices can be the difference between gaining a new franchisee who wants to make a large investment, and losing out from offering a deal that's too constricted.

To further ramp up sales and growth, we applied for nationwide state registration for the first time – a nearly six month process that has allowed us to sell franchises in every state. Before registering we were able to offer franchise opportunities in approximately 25 percent of registration states; while some states don't need



anything more than filing a franchise agreement, others need several documents to be submitted and approved, plus major fees. CCI hadn't wanted to invest the money in the past because we didn't have the fresh branding and outside help to push for aggressive growth. After taking all the preceding steps we realized only offering opportunities in a portion of the U.S. was holding us back and greatly limiting our reach.

Spread Awareness

Lastly, in order to effectively rebrand, we knew we needed to hire a public relations firm to help spread the word about CCI's changes and improvements. This was the last step for getting our message out and educating consumers about our revolutionary methods and processes that are much more cost-effective and convenient than pursuing the replacement route. By bringing on a public relations firm we're able to gain brand exposure and awareness on a national and local scale across a variety of media, including consumer, business and industry publications. Locally, our public relations firm helps us push for expansion in target markets by educating prospective business

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owners about our concept and that we're coming to town. The agency also helps CCI promote newly opened franchises by sharing their stories with local reporters and offering them for interviews to discuss their backgrounds and the need for the CCI concept in his/her market. Working with the firm is highly beneficial not only for our brand but also for reminding the franchisees that we support them and their ongoing growth.

Continue Ongoing Support For Franchisees

Over the past two years we've made sure to never neglect our current franchisees throughout the often demanding revamp period. One of our largest focuses has been to help grow their local sales in order to result in a truly cohesive, stronger national brand and franchise system. This includes implementing new marketing programs and services within each territory, such as offering more B2B options for repairs through warranty and certification programs. We're always looking for ways to help our franchisees continue to evolve and become increasingly marketable to all of the diverse industries we serve, including the auto, aviation, commercial and marine/RV sectors. With the franchisees onboard and the revamp in place, our goal is to become the national leader in all four markets.

Since 2012 when the rebranding really



kicked off with the website upgrade, we've already noticed significant changes; while our average growth from year to year typically ranged between five and 10 percent, over the past three years we've achieved a 10 to 30 percent growth rate with some markets even surpassing that. For fellow franchisors considering rebranding their business, the best advice I can give is to understand that it is a long, often grueling undertaking. It took CCI nearly two years from start to finish, which is about six months longer than we had anticipated. With that, I recommend franchisors outline a timetable for the renovation progression and be cautiously optimistic with your sights for growth. Each variable needs to be thoroughly reviewed and researched along the way as one decision can and will affect all the trickling decisions down the road.

About Creative Colors International

Launched in 1991, the Creative Colors

International (CCI) franchise system caters to the abundance of upholstered items in every home, business and vehicle. The ultimate in on-site repair, CCI provides services such as restoration, cleaning, protection, and dyeing of leather, vinyl, plastic and fabric. CCI repairs are stronger than the original area and are nearly invisible to the naked eye.

Mark Bollman has been the President and Director of Creative Colors International since May of 2000. Before becoming President, Bollman started out as a service technician for J&J's Creative Colors in 1991. Following, he served as a Field Consultant from September of 1991 to November of 1992. From there, he was promoted to Director of Operations until January of 1995, and then further raised to Senior Vice President from 1995 to 2000.

For more information:

Website: www.wecanfixthat.com.